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**Planning Department**

**INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATION**

**To:** Don Johnson, Town Manager **Date:** October 19, 2006  
**Revised:** November 3, 2006

**From:** Kristin K. Alexander, AICP, Assistant Town Planner *YKA*

**Subject:** 2 School St., 127-131 Main St. Site Plan Special Permit & Special Permit,  
# 09/15/06-410

***The Planning Department has reviewed the revised plan for 2 School St./127-131 Main St. (dated 10/30/06) and the applicant's response letter to staff comments (also dated 10/30/06). The Planning Department's comments on the revised plan and letter are below in bold italics. Staff wrote "Addressed" when the applicant adequately addressed an initial comment.***

Staff has reviewed the 2 School St., 127-131 Main St. Site Plan Special Permit and Special Permit application. The applicant is proposing commercial, office, and residential uses for the site. The Acton Master Plan and Zoning Bylaw encourage a mix of uses in the Town's villages. The uses proposed appear to be appropriate for the site, should draw people to South Acton Village, and will hopefully promote further development activity in the area. These are goals of the Acton Master Plan and South Acton Village Plan. The proposal would also restore the focal point of South Acton Village - Exchange Hall. Exchange Hall (2 School Street) is one of the most significant buildings in Acton because of its history and architecture. The Abram Jones house (129-131 Main Street) should also be restored as part of the proposal. The 127 Main Street residential building is proposed to be razed. All three buildings are located in the South Acton Historic District and fall under the jurisdiction of the Acton Historic District Commission. The Town encourages the preservation and restoration of structures deemed historically significant. Changes have been proposed to improve site design as well. These changes are generally positive and compatible with the surrounding area. However, staff has concerns, primarily related to vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and they are listed below.

1. On page 2 of the 8/23/06 letter from the applicant to the Selectmen, it states that the total area of the lots is 39,911 square feet (0.92 acres). Sheets 1 and 5 of the Plan state the total combined area as 30,911 square feet. Staff agrees with the lot area shown on the Plan.  
***Addressed***
2. Staff has not seen the architectural drawings or a traffic analysis for the site. They should be submitted for review.  
***Architectural drawings –***
  - ***Floor plans were not submitted for three out of the four floors of Exchange Hall.***
  - ***Architectural drawings/floor plans were not submitted for 129/131 Main Street.***

**Traffic analysis –**

- **The traffic analysis was conducted assuming that the School Street driveway would be full access (two-way traffic) and the Main Street driveway would be a right turn only exit (one-way traffic). This is the opposite of what was proposed by the applicant. A new traffic analysis should be conducted that reflects the 10/30/06 Plan. The new traffic analysis can then also use the correct number of seats proposed for each use in Exchange Hall: 173 restaurant seats and 225 function hall seats.**
  - **The traffic analysis used the Institute of Transportation Engineer's (ITE's) Trip Generation Land Use Code for a "High Turnover (Sit Down) Restaurant" for the proposed restaurant in Exchange Hall. This assumption results in probably a worst case/maximum traffic scenario for the restaurant. Staff would have used the Land Use Code for a "Quality Restaurant" for both the proposed restaurant and function hall.**
3. In the Zoning Summary Table on Plan Sheet 5, change the required side and rear setbacks to 10 feet. **Addressed**
  4. Based on the Acton Zoning Bylaw requirements, 41 spaces minimum are required for the restaurant and 40 spaces minimum are required for the function hall. The Parking Summary Table on Plan Sheet 5 should be changed accordingly. **Addressed**
  5. It is stated in the Parking Summary Table on Plan Sheet 5 that 23 spaces will be provided on-site. This statement is accurate only for traffic arriving before 5:00 PM each weekday. After 5:00 PM on weekdays, four of these spaces cannot be used for parking as they become valet parking pick up and drop off areas. The Parking Summary Table should be changed to reflect the shift in available spaces between daytime and nighttime hours and the total number of spaces should be reduced from 148 spaces to 144 spaces. **Addressed**
  6. At least one parking space, or maybe two, should be reserved on-site for the apartment resident(s). **Addressed**
  7. Staff recommends that the applicant consider reversing the traffic circulation pattern to clockwise in the rear of the site (behind Exchange Hall). Reversing the traffic pattern would provide an exit for all traffic entering the rear parking lot if all spaces were occupied, and provide a shorter route to the site's exit for the valet parking service on the east side of Exchange Hall. **Addressed**

***Is there a north facing "Do Not Enter" sign proposed on the east side of the property where the traffic coming from the rear parking lot (heading south) meets the traffic entering the site from School Street (heading north), so the traffic from the parking lot does not try to exit the site via the School Street access drive? If not, please show one on the Plan.***

8. Regardless of the off-site parking arrangements, the project would greatly benefit and be more viable if parking on-site was increased. On-site the project doesn't even have half the parking spaces needed for the restaurant, office and residence. People who have limited time to sit down and eat lunch may choose a restaurant with plenty of on-site parking versus a restaurant where they have to park down the street. The applicant should pursue and/or resolve agreements with neighboring properties to allow additional parking to be constructed and used on the easement for the site north of 12 and 20 School Street.  
**Staff has read the applicant's response but is still concerned about the viability of the project due to the minimal amount of parking on-site. Staff strongly recommends that**

*the applicant continue to work to try and resolve this issue with the neighboring property owners.*

9. Signs should be posted in the parking lot stating where additional parking is available off-site for patrons. **Addressed**
10. Bollards (or similar equipment) should be located where parking spaces or travel lanes abut structures to provide protection to the structures and people inside the structures. **Addressed**
11. The sidewalks along the buildings are labeled as 5 feet wide. They appear to be less than 5 feet wide when measured with a scale. The sidewalks should be widened to five feet on the Plan. **Addressed**
12. There should be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant access from the pick up and drop off valet parking spaces to the Exchange Hall entrance since people with disabilities will probably also be using this service at night and on the weekends. **Addressed**
13. A sidewalk should be constructed from the Main Street sidewalk near the crosswalks to Exchange Hall, possibly along the driveway entering the site. **Addressed**
14. The sidewalk in the rear of the site should extend to the dumpster so people can access it. **Addressed**

cc: Garry Rhodes, Building Commissioner  
Planning Board